

Sonor XK925



by Bob Saydlowski, Jr.

I recently visited Sonor's distributor depot here in the States—Charles Alden Music in Walpole, Massachusetts—and was able to test their XK925 5-piece kit.

All *Sonor* phonic shells are made of 9-ply beechwood with staggered seams. Most other shells are made from a flat piece of wood steamed and rolled into a circle and then glued together. There is a weak spot where the two ends meet to form a seam. Sonor's shell is constructed ply by ply from the outside in. The glueing is done with an oil-heated press. Each inner joint is staggered, thereby strengthening the shell with no need for reinforcing rings. The result is a fully vibrating shell with a 45° bevel on both ends (except on concert toms, where the bottoms are finished flat). After being covered in plastic, the shells are almost half an inch thick. The drums use a "floating head" principle much like a tympani, where the shell is made just a bit undersize relative to the head and counterhoop. The only head contact point is at the bearing edge. This allows for easier and finer tuning.

The XK925 components are: 14" x 22" bass drum, 16" x 16" floor tom, 9" x 13" and 10" x 14" mounted toms, and a 5 3/4" x 14" steel snare drum.

The 22" bass has 20 lugs fitted with T-handle style tensioners and pressed steel claws. Both metal hoops have a plastic insert at their bottom for pedal clamping. Spurs are made from a thick rod, shaped into a curved triangle. The triangle tip is angled towards the front of the drum to prevent unnecessary "creep" of the bass drum. The entire spur is connected to a prism clamp on the bass drum, locking in place with a T-screw. The tip of each spur has a threaded rubber tip with an exposable spike tip. When packing the drum, the spurs fold flush against the shell following the natural curve of the drum. The drum is fitted with a felt strip

underneath each head. Sonor also has an adjustable internal damper for their bass drums available on their Rosewood kits. However, the internal damper may be purchased separately for about \$60, but has to be installed by the user. One thing that upsets me about this Sonor bass drum is that the venthole and badge are located at the *bottom* of the drum. I was told that Sonor feels their new tom-tom holder plate took up enough space on the drum, and drilling another hole nearby would weaken the shell. From a structural point of view, it does make sense. I played the drum single-headed with a CS batter and found it to have more than ample volume and good tone. A blanket inside would make it punch a little better. Adding a transparent *Ambassador* front head gave it a little more tonal depth. The drum comes stock with coated *Ambassador's* but other heads are available as options at a very small additional cost.

The 13" and 14" mounted toms have 12 and 16 lugs respectively. The 16" x 16" floor tom has 16. All drums have seamless triple-flanged hoops. Sonor lugs are foam-padded and accept their slotted tension rods (turned with a Sonor key or a quarter). Threads are cut into the rods, instead of being pressed. All Sonor drums, except bass drums, are now equipped with *Snap-Lock*—a counterlock device. A "D"-shaped wire spring is inserted through a slot in each lug insert. The tension rods have flattened threads on two sides. When the rod is turned with a flat edge showing outward, the spring's flat side clamps it, locking the rod in place. Hard rock drummers will love these, because under heavy playing, de-tuning of the tension rods cannot cause a problem anymore. However, I found it time-consuming to change heads with these *Snap-Locks* fitted, as every time the rod is turned to a

flat, it locks to the spring. It takes a while to bypass all the thread lockstops and remove the rod. Sonor has incorporated a great idea for the mounted drums. Each tom has two ventholes and badges located opposite each other. Besides dispersing air quicker, a Sonor badge will always face the audience no matter which way the toms are set up. Their large black-and-silver rectangular badge is silkscreened with the Sonor logo and shell type.

Sonor has also totally remodeled their tom-tom holder, a massive cast block through which a single 29mm tube passes. There is a recess in this block for a memory height clamp on the tube to fit into. Beneath the block is a strengthening plate with a pipe cast into it to keep the height tube steadied. The tube is locked into place by a T-screw pressing against a wedge in the plate, in turn, pressing against the tube thus securing height position. At the top of the tube is a large two-piece prism plate with two openings to accept the holder arms. The arms are locked into position by faucet-type lever handles turning sprung locking nuts. The levers can be moved out of each other's way by being pressed in and turned, defeating the spring, somewhat like a torque wrench. The tom-tom arms are basically the same as Sonor's previous ones. A spring-loaded ratchet tube passes through the tom-tom, again clamped tight via an angled T-screw and wedge in the tom-tom plate. I am amazed that Sonor didn't fit "memory clamps" to the holder arms as they did with the bottom holder tube. They'd be a sure advantage. The holder works well, and looks quite impressive. It works well for wide-spread tom setups, and is also comfortable enough to position close together. I was assured by the Alden people that they've never had a problem with the bass drum shell buckling under the weight of the holder and tom-toms,

continued on following page

which causes ovaling particularly if the front head is left off. If you like the single-head sound, I would recommend cutting a hole in the front head, or removing the head and installing hoop spacers to keep the rods and counterhoop on the front of the drum.

The floor tom has three angled legs which fit into prism clamp blocks. It's a mystery to me why, having regular rubber feet, the floor tom's legs are the only pieces of Sonor hardware that do not have the adjustable locking rubber/spike tips.

The internal mufflers on the drums have a thick 2 1/2" felt pad and work smoothly. Sonor also makes external dampers similar to the Rogers *Super-X* which clip to the drum rim and adjust with a wing bolt. The three toms come stock with Remo coated *Ambassador* heads. The drums do sound very alive with the *Ambassadors*, especially when tuned high. A *CS* or *PinStripe* would sound great for low-tuned rock playing.

The *D505* snare drum is made of ferromagnesian steel in a 10-lug seamless shell. The drum is plated in three steps, copper, nickel, and finally a bright, heavy chrome finish. The edges of the drum have a 45° flange like all other Sonor drums, and a center reinforcing bead. All of Sonor's snare drums are drawn out of the center of one piece of metal in one operation by a projecting machine. The strainer is of the side-throw type, adjustable for tension at both ends, stretching the snares evenly like in a parallel snare system. It works efficiently, without a lot of little adjustments like most parallel snare drums. The drum comes with 22-strand cord-attached snares and is supplied with *Diplomat* heads. The drum leaves the factory tuned with a stroboscope. I found it to have a crisp, alive sound, right out of the box. It's very responsive (thanks to the thin heads), and has enough volume to probably fill a 20,000-seat hall. The price is competitive with other drums, and for the money, it's one of the best going.

The two *Z5232* cymbal stands have wide-spread single braced tripod legs with rubber/spike tips. Each section is gripped by an indirect-pressured clamp. The tilter is spring-loaded and works on a ratchet system. The entire tilter assembly is removable from the top tube in a separate piece. Sonor also makes double-braced stands with an *extremely* wide stance, as well as a stand with two boom arms to hold two cymbals.

The snare stand also has a tripod base, but folds from the bottom. Angle adjustment is locked with a giant wing screw. The stand uses the "basket" principle. Sonor's unique method of gripping the drum is via a lever that raises the basket arms up to clamp the snare secure. At

the end of Sonor's basket shaft is a knurled knob that sets up the width of the basket the first time. After that, the drum is "quick-released" and "quick-clamped" with the lever. Once you learn how to set it up, it works very nicely.

The *Z5456* hi-hat stand has a two-piece footboard covered in rubber which connects to the internal rod via a metal strap. The top pull rod is hexagonal. The cymbal cannot twist or turn when the hi-hat clutch, with its hex hole, is mated on the pull rod. The clutch screw presses against a flat surface rather than a curved one. The tripod legs have the adjustable tips. Tension is not adjustable. It had a somewhat "tight" feel on first try, but Sonor thoughtfully includes two extra springs of different tensions to meet different players' needs. The bass drum pedal is the *Z5317* reviewed in my *Product Close-Up*, (MD: Oct/Nov-1980). If you missed it, here's a capsule description. The *Z5317* is of the single expansion spring type with a two-piece pressed footboard inset with ribbed rubber and a removable toe stop. The beater is conical shaped, hard felt. Linkage is a thick strap made of industrial fiber. The pedal clamps to the drum hoop using an angled T-screw halfway down its left side, screwing down a sprung metal plate. Stroke and footboard angle are both adjustable. Three extra springs are

included for varied tensions. The *Z5317* is an efficient pedal and is beautifully designed.

The kit I saw was in Metallic Silver, but it's also available in Metallic Copper, Bronze Pewter, Ruby, Blue, Gloss White, or Black for \$2,372.00. Other finishes are available at different price levels: oak or mahogany veneer for \$2500, outside rosewood veneer for \$2742, or genuine rosewood veneer, inside and out, for \$2970. The Metallic Silver looks good. Covering seams are hidden from the audience view, and I imagine under stage lights, it would look majestic.

While at the Sonor depot, I saw a well-stocked parts department. Service should be no problem. Waiting for a bass drum spur to come from Germany could take a while, but Alden has all the needed parts, ready to be shipped in the U.S. or Canada.

The *XK925* is a well-built kit. The 9-ply shells are flawless, and make for a heavy drum. The chrome looks good, and the hardware is strong. With today's price levels, this kit in Metallic or Gloss, is really not much more expensive than other kits. Now if you really want to spend some dollars, check out Sonor's recently-released *Signature Series* 12-ply exotic wood shells in an 8-drum kit with hardware—for \$6885.

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